

THE SCIENCES

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST



The biological imperfection of man, at the present state of his evolution, has been discussed at great length. Our critics unfairly neglect the other side of the equation: the complexity of the problems we face. Man is the only intelligent creature on this planet; as soon as his rational functions evolved to the point that culture was possible, he was bound to

explore and inhabit the biosphere to the very margins of possibility, and these margins are neither always comfortable nor assuredly durable. Man is likely to press against similar margins whatever improvements he evolves or designs.

I can, however, think of one function we lack by contrast to electronic computers, namely INNOCENCE. No complex program ever works as an immediate outcome of its prior design. However, computer programs can be perfected ("debugged") by repetitive trial and error—the disasters being subject to erasure so that the system memory is restored to a standard condition. This stabilizes the problem so that it can often be solved. The human condition suffers from the fact that our sins and our guilt are cumulative; we may assuage, we may forgive, but have no way to forget.

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